Lackluster growth in agriculture and new farm policy

1571. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the last five to ten years the stock of wheat has been declining due to lacklustre growth in agriculture and during 2007 Government resorted to wheat import of more than 10 lakh tonnes at a much higher price than what we have been paying to our farmers;

(b) if so, what are the man-made constraints in increasing our production of wheat other than perennial floods and droughts; and

(c) how the new farm policy, announced in November 2007, will give fillip towards more production and better crop yields?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Procurement higher than the offtake had resulted in a build-up of excessive stocks of foodgrains during the two successive years of 2001-02 and 2002-03. Subsequently, however, due to increased offtake under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and other welfare schemes, stocks of foodgrains stood at 18.8 million tonnes on January 1, 2006, lower than the buffer stock norm of 20 million tonnes. However, the stocks of foodgrains increased to 19.2 million tonnes on January 1, 2008. Due to rapid rise in income in developing countries, low output stocks and drought conditions in wheat producing countries and increased shipping costs raised the landed cost of imported grains.

(b) The common constraints in increasing production of wheat include lack of adequate irrigation; genetic erosion; weak linkage between research & extension; soil degradation; limited credit access and insufficient post-harvest infrastructure.

(c) The National Policy for Farmers 2007 contains policy prescriptions for improvement in production and profitability of farming and for better crop yields. Some of these provisions are maximizing yield and income per unit of irrigation water in all crop production programmes, rainwater harvesting and aquifer recharge, provision of good quality seeds and disease free planting material, establishment of a National Seed Grid (NSG), timely, adequate and easy reach of farm credit/loan to the farmers.

Bird-flu in Andhra Pradesh

1572. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRASEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the bird-flu lands poultry industry in Andhra Pradesh in soup;

(b) if so, the facts thereof;

(c) the reasons for not controlling bird-flu in the State;

(d) the estimated loss thereon; and

(e) the assistance given to the poultry industry so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) No, Sir. Though there is no bird-flu outbreak in Andhra Pradesh, the bird-flu outbreak in West Bengal has affected the egg movement from Andhra Pradesh.

(b) Andhra Pradesh sends 110 lakh eggs every day to Kolkata market. Due to bird-flu outbreak in West Bengal these eggs could not be sent. Purchase and sale have been adversely affected.

(c) Does not arise, as there is no bird-flu outbreak reported in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

(d) As per information received from Government of Andhra Pradesh, the estimated losses due to restricted market of eggs from Andhra Pradesh to other States is around Rs. 7.00 crores per day.

The poultry industry has put the loss due to the current episode of Avian Influenza in West Bengal at Rs. 1500 crore over a period of two months. As per calculation done by this Department, the loss of poultry industry is assessed to range from Rs. 904 crores to Rs. 1266 crores in different scenarios of price decline over a period of two months.

(e) In order to provide economic relief to the poultry farmers/industry adversely affected due to occurrence of Avian Influenza, the Reserve Bank of India has issued guidelines to all scheduled commercial banks on 19th February 2008 for moratorium upto one year on the repayment of working capital loans, interest due and term loans outstanding as on 31st December, 2007, conversion of working capital loans and interest due into term loans and provision of need-based fresh finance.

Development of Agriculture in Maoist influenced areas

1573. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) in order to contain naxalite/maoist menance what special steps Government has taken for the development of agriculture in maoist influenced areas in the country;

(b) as most of the areas are having one rain-fed crop season, whether a second crop such as pulses, oil seeds, medicinal plants, vegetables or fodder crops can be developed in those areas; and

(c) if so, the steps Government has taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation is implementing a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes for increasing the production and productivity in the agriculture sector all over the country including the maoist influenced areas. However, no specific steps for Maoist influenced areas are envisaged.

(b) and (c) A Statement indicating the steps taken under the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation usual schemes for agricultural development in the Maoist influenced areas is enclosed.